

The finish to a fun career

□ Helen Baller Principal
Jerry Moss to retire after
33 years in education

By Danielle Frost
Post-Record staff

Every year, Helen Baller Principal Jerry Moss gives out more than 5,000 "I shot baskets with Mr. Moss" stickers.

"That's 5,000 good visits to the principal's office," he said. "It truly beats 5,000 bad ones."

It's just one of the ways Moss tries to develop positive relationships with the students, and one of the traditions they will undoubtedly miss when he retires this June.

Moss, who can often be seen sporting a basketball tie, began the tradition 20 years ago while principal at St. Joe's in Vancouver and hasn't looked back. Students are given "chance" tickets, mainly for demonstrating their understanding of what it takes to be a good student and citizen. Students who make a basket get to pick a prize out of the "treasure chest" in his office.

Now, after 33 years in education and 100,000 baskets attempted, Moss is moving on to the next phase in his life.

"I'm old," he quipped. "I'm 62, and it's time to do something different."

Some activities Moss is looking forward to are spending more time with his family, woodworking, visiting his vacation home in central Oregon, vacationing in Hawaii, skiing, scuba diving and playing racquetball.

Moss also plans to expand his work with the Camas-Washougal Community Chest, a local charitable organization. But he doubts he'll get far from Helen Baller.

"Amy Wing (the P.E. teacher) already has a list of projects for me to do," he said.

And if that isn't enough, Camas School District Superintendent Mike Nerland has plans for Moss as well.

"I'm sure we can sign him up for a committee or two," he said. "Mel Cardon (a long serving board member who recently retired) is already back, heading up one."

During his years in education, Moss has spent 20 as an administrator, and the last nine at Helen Baller. He said his experience in Camas has been top-notch.

"It's the best I've had in my career," he said. "I'll really miss all the camaraderie with the staff at Helen Baller and the administrative group. They are just a fun bunch of people to work with, and you gotta make work fun."

When asked what he'll miss the most, Moss got teary eyed for a moment, then joked about being a wreck at his retirement party.

"I love it when you see the lights come on in their heads," he said. "The kids just give you so much, and they're why you're here."

One of his favorite memories from the nine years as Helen Baller principal is the annual staff dance. During the school's spring program, they go on stage and perform a crazy dance routine.

"That's pretty darn unique," he said. "You just don't have that kind of camaraderie at most places. Those dances have been going on since before I came and it's still part of the culture here."

Helping to open a brand new school this year was also an exciting highlight.

"It's been pretty cool," Moss said. "I love the construction process, too. This has been a pretty impressive way to finish a career. It's been a pretty big change, too."

He jokingly said that he's sure the staff will find a way to blame him for all the design aspects of the building they don't like, so he has a plan to combat it:

"I'm going to put a plaque up that lists all the members of the design team," he said. "It wasn't just me."

Another fond memory Moss has is working with Edna Janson, known as "Grandma Edna," a volunteer with the Foster Grandparent program who spent four days a week volunteering in the kindergarten classrooms. She kept coming in until she was 92.

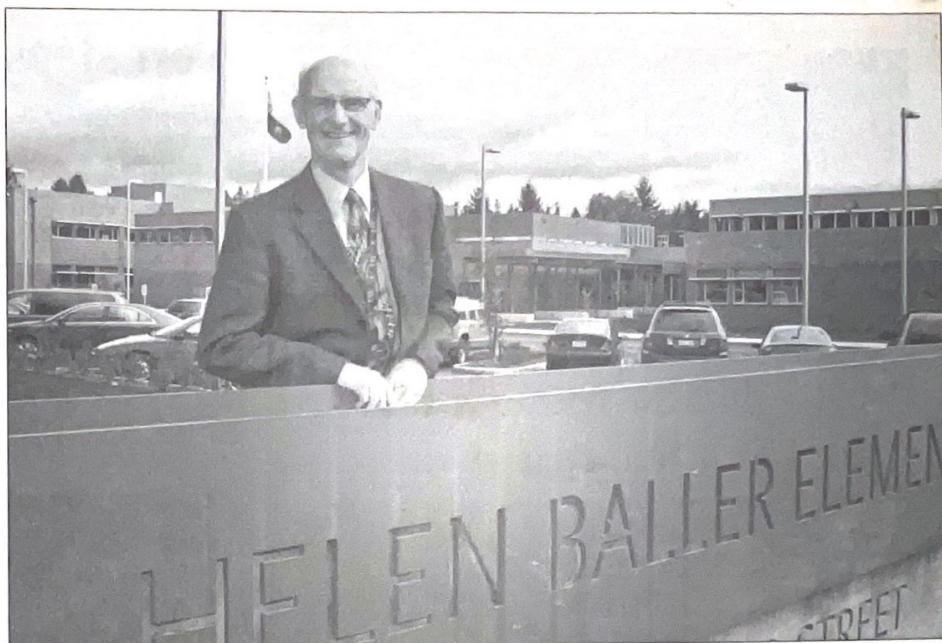
"She was amazing, and so upbeat and happy to be here every day," he said.

As he reflects on his own retirement, Moss said, "It's been a great run, truly. How often do you get to do something you really like for 33 years?"

It's that attitude which is noticed by parents and administrators alike.

"I like that he knows every single child's name," said parent Lynette Marshall, who has twins at the school. "He's so personable and I'm really sad he is leaving."

Superintendent Mike Nerland served on the hiring committee that interviewed Moss nine years ago. He



Jerry Moss is retiring as principal of Helen Baller after nine years. During his tenure, he had the opportunity to be a part of designing and opening the new school, pictured in the background. Before coming to Camas, he worked in the Washougal School District as the principal of Hathaway Elementary.

recalled a funny incident that happened while they were on a district tour.

"Jerry was the principal at Hathaway Elementary in Washougal at the time," he said. "I was his driver and we were getting ready to park and walk in when Jerry ducked down into the floorboards and said, 'That's one of my Washougal parents. I can't go in!' We never did take the tour. It ended up working out well, though, but I'll never forget that."

Nerland said one of the characteristics he admires about Moss is his fun-loving attitude.

"His interaction with the kids is so positive," he said. "They just love him. He has just been a great, great principal in the Camas School District."

Shelley Houle, a fifth-grade teacher at Helen Baller, will miss his fun-loving attitude as well.

"I (first) worked for Jerry as a classified staff person when he was the principal at Hathaway, and my first thought was that he was as goofy as the kids," she said. "Later, when I earned my teaching certificate, there was an opening at Helen Baller where Jerry was principal. I have now taught there for eight years and enjoyed every minute of it. Besides leading, motivating and supporting the staff at Baller, he has also entertained us with stories, funny voices and outrageous dancing."

She added that Moss is a fun and fair boss, who takes it in good stride when people pull a prank on him.

"He is a great leader

Parman to take helm as new principal

Aaron Parman, a professional development specialist, will take the helm as Helen Baller's leader after Moss retires in June. Here are a few quick facts about him. A longer interview will follow in late summer.

Age: 37
Resides in: Camas
Years in education: 14
Where currently employed/title: Image Elementary School in the Evergreen School District - professional development specialist

Why did you apply for the Helen Baller job?

As a parent who has daughters that attend Grass Valley Elementary School and previously Helen Baller, I know how respected and supported the schools are by the community. The schools put children first, have high expectations and work to prepare students to be successful socially and academically. I know the staff is

dedicated to helping all kids be successful. I want to be part of a community that strives to meet the needs of all children.

What are you looking forward to the most?

I am looking forward to building new relationships with kids, parents, staff and community members. I look forward to working with the staff to build on Helen Baller's successes and continue to make it a school where children are put first and they want to attend school because they feel valued and are engaged.

What do you think you'll bring to the school?

I am a person who loves working with kids, values relationships, is collaborative and knows good instruction due to the experiences I have had as a teacher, instructional coach and administrator in the Evergreen Public Schools. I am very excited and feel fortunate to have this opportunity.

who encourages fun in the workplace, and often gets on the intercom after the kids have left for the day and gives announcements in funny voices," Houle said. "My favorite memory is from a couple of years ago when we pranked him using the show 'The Office' as our inspiration. One day, we hid a phone in his ceiling and kept calling it while he was meeting with the superintendent."

"I am really going to miss one of the best bosses I have ever worked for."

Fourth-grade teacher Laurie Brown said the quality she likes most about Moss is his respect for people

and his ability to be a good listener.

"He accepts all people for who they are, and takes time to acknowledge each and every person he comes into contact with," she said. "He is personable, respectful and kind to all people. Jerry has taught me so much about how to live life, treat others and to embrace my job. With

regret for me, but happiness for him and his wife, Kathy, it is very difficult to see this part of my life come to an end."

There will be a retirement party for Moss at Helen Baller from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m. Friday, May 21. It is open to the public. The school is located at 1954 N.E. Garfield St.

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